For Immediate Release

September 9, 2024

Halifax, Nova Scotia - As the strike by Halifax Public Libraries workers enters its 3rd week, we wish to provide an update on the status of negotiations and the reasoning behind our ongoing efforts for a fair contract.

While both sides appear to be willing to go back to the table, neither side is offering something new and so returning to the table at this point in time would not be productive.

Initial and Current Offers:

After multiple rounds of negotiation and compromises, the Union has made significant movement on their wage offer.

Union's Offers

	Union's Initial Offer	**Union's Current Offer**
2023-24	$7.06/hour for all levels (amount necessary to increase Level 2 staff to $26.50, the living wage at the time)	$0.50 + 3%
2024-25	6%	$0.50 + 3.5%
2025-26	2% increase + COLA increase	$0.50 + 3.5%
2026-27	No fourth year	$0.50 + 3.5%

HPL's Offers

	Library's Initial Offer	**Library's Current Offer**
2023-24	3%	3.5%
2024-25	3%	$0.25 + 3%
2025-26	2.5%	$0.25 + 3%
2026-27	2%	$0.25 + 3%

The gap between our final offer and the library's is minimal and remains in line with what other municipal employees across Halifax are actually earning in actual dollars (not percentages).

In an effort to avoid going on strike, the Union made every possible effort to come to an agreement to take back to members on August 25; in fact, we came within $0.75 over the last three years of the contract. This comes at an additional cost of $155 058 each year for the last three years of the contract.

How close we came to compromising for an offer we could take to our members			
	HPL Offer	**Union Offer**	
2023-24	3.5%	3.5%	In agreement
2024-25	$0.25 + 3%	$0.50 + 3%	Off by $0.25
2025-26	$0.25 + 3%	$0.50 + 3%	Off by $0.25
2026-27	$0.25 + 3%	$0.50 + 3%	Off by $0.25

Clerks Finally Moved to Wage Scale After Years of Advocacy

After years of persistent advocacy, HPL clerks are finally seeing a significant shift in their compensation structure. Previously excluded from the wage scale, library clerks are earning just $1.25 above minimum wage, despite the essential role they play in serving the community.

For far too long, our clerks have been undervalued, receiving a mere $16.45 per hour for their dedicated service. After several months of pushing in the current round of negotiations, HPLS finally agreed to move clerks onto the wage scale as Level 1 on August 25. While this represents a significant percentage increase, it's important to consider what this means in actual dollar terms:

Current Wage: $16.45 per hour
New Wage Scale per HPL's Offer: $19.89-$22.61 per hour
New Wage Scale per Union's Offer: $20.78-$23.52 per hour

Members Continue to Fight for Fair and Reasonable Wages

Our members continue to fight for fair and reasonable wages that reflect the essential services we provide to Halifax residents. Last week, Halifax Public Libraries presented their "fair" offer to HRM Councillors, arguing that it aligns percentage-wise with other municipal raises. However, when the actual hourly wage offered is compared, it becomes evident that library wages lag significantly behind those of other HRM employees. This disparity is all too common for Library workers across the country. The message from managers and politicians is clear: we don't value you.

Below is a chart highlighting the disparity between positions. Information for HRM was taken from the NSGEU 222 Collective Agreement. Wage charts for the Union's offer and Management's offer are attached to this email.

HRM: Interoffice Courier | HPL: Courier			
	HRM	**Library Offer**	**Union Counter**
23/24	$25.70	$21.36-$24.35	$21.88-$24.87
24/25	$26.47	$22.26-$25.34	$23.16-$26.25

HRM: Customer Service Representative | HPL: Service Advisor (Information Desk)			
	HRM	**Library Offer**	**Union Counter**
23/24	$29.40	$24.41-$27.85	$24.93-$28.37
24/25	$30.28	$25.40-$28.94	$26.32-$29.88

HRM: Youth Advocate Worker | HPL: Teen Specialist			
	HRM	**Library Offer**	**Union Counter**
23/24	$36.14	$28.46-$32.50	$28.98-$33.02
24/25	$37.22	$29.57-$33.73	$30.51-$34.69

HRM: Payroll Administrator | HPL: Payroll Coordinator			
	HRM	**Library Offer**	**Union Counter**
23/24	$36.14	$28.46-$32.50	$28.98-$33.02
24/25	$37.22	$29.57-$33.73	$30.51-$34.69

HRM: Community Recreation Coordinator | HPL: Programming & Community Engagement Lead			
	HRM	**Library Offer**	**Union Counter**
23/24	$41.26	$33.82-38.65	$34.34-$39.17
24/25	$42.50	$33.82-38.65	$36.06-$41.06

HRM: Service Desk Analyst | HPL: IT Support Specialist			
	HRM	**Library Offer**	**Union Counter**
23/24	$42.86	$36.76-$42.02	$37.28-$42.19
24/25	$44.15	$38.12-$43.54	$39.10-$44.55

Lack of Transparency from the Library Board:

It is also important to highlight the ongoing lack of transparency from the Library Board. From HPL's website, "Board meetings are public, but if a confidential matter needs to be discussed, that portion of the meeting may be held in private." Despite multiple members of the public having reached out to Alison Lucio for more information around the location and time, they have been repeatedly unable to obtain the location and time for the next scheduled board meeting on September 12. This lack of openness raises concerns about the board's commitment to accountability and public engagement during this critical time.

The community's support remains vital, and we believe that with continued public pressure, a fair and just resolution can be achieved. We stand ready to return to the table when there is something new to discuss.

Media Contact

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